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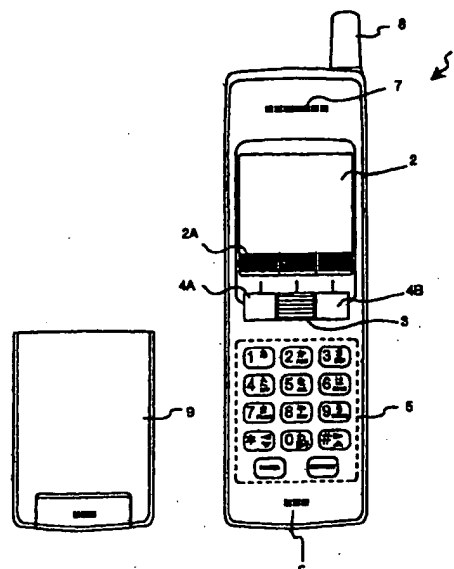
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(54) PORTABLE TERMINAL

(57) A portable terminal comprises a LCD display screen (2) located on a control surface of a case for displaying thereon information according to the communication mode; a main soft key (3) located below the LCD display screen (2) with which can be rotated in a direction towards or away from the display screen as well as can be pressed; and first auxiliary soft key (4A) and second auxiliary soft key (4B) located on the two sides of the main soft key (3) which can be pressed. In this portable terminal, for each communication mode, function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to the main soft key (3) mode and functions having the next highest frequency of use are allocated to the first auxiliary soft key (4A) and second auxiliary soft key (4B). Further, marks representing the allocated functions are displayed on the LCD display screen (2) near the positions of the main soft key and the first auxiliary soft key (4A) and a second auxiliary soft key (4B) as main-function icon and auxiliary-function icon respectively.

FIG.1



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Description

TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS

- 5 [0001] The present invention relates to a portable terminal, and more specifically to a portable telecommunication terminal applicable, for instance, to a mobile telephone.

BACKGROUND TECHNOLOGY

- 10 [0002] Mobile telephones having functions for entering and registering telephone numbers and names of parties or the like, and function for retrieving information from the registered directory lists, and function for creating and retrieving personal information as well as schedule and electronic mails (email) are known. Generally, an input device such as a ten-key or the input device disclosed in Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. HEI 9-34620 is used for registering information in the above mentioned directory list, personal information, schedule, or email. Further, selection means disclosed in Japanese Patent Laid-Open Publication No. HEI 7-297891 may be used for selecting any one of the plurality parties already registered in the directory list or the like.

- [0003] Weight and size of the mobile telephone is decreasing, while the functions provided therein are increasing day by day. Considering this fact, the mobile telephone is getting short of space for incorporating therein the input device and the various types of function keys or the like. From the ergonomic point of view, it is disadvantageous to arrange a large number of input devices in a small space, because such an arrangement worsens the operability of the mobile telephone. In order to overcome this disadvantage due to a small space, allocating multiple functions to one input device may be considered. However, when multiple functions are allocated to one input device, the user is required to memorize all the functions allocated to the input device so that the load on the user increases. Further, from the psychological pressure due to remembering the information, the operational procedure becomes complicated. Further, now a days it is common for the mobile telephones to incorporate means for inputting characters for writing an email. However, the method of inputting the characters in the conventional mobile telephone is very complicated.

- 25 [0004] The present invention has been made for solving the problems described above, and it is an object of the present invention to provide a portable terminal which can realize versatility and downsizing by utilizing minimum entry keys and significantly improve the usability.

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DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

- [0005] A portable terminal according to the present invention comprises, a case having a control panel surface; a display screen located on the control panel surface of the case for displaying thereon information according to a communication mode; a main soft key located below the display screen, with which main soft key a rotating operation as well as a pressing operation can be performed; and an auxiliary soft key located by the side of the main soft key, with which auxiliary soft key a pressing operation can be performed; wherein a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to the main soft key for each communication mode and a function having a higher frequency of use is allocated to the auxiliary soft key, and marks representing the functions allocated to the main and auxiliary soft keys are displayed near the respective keys as a main-function icon and an auxiliary-function icon respectively on the display screen.

- [0006] In the portable terminal described above, one main soft key and one auxiliary soft key is provided. Further, marks representing the functions allocated to the main and the auxiliary soft keys are displayed near the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key respectively on the display screen as a main-function icon and an auxiliary function icon. Therefore, number of required entry keys can be reduced. In addition, operation can be performed while looking at the instructions on the display screen without taking help of manuals, so that operability of the device is improved because of the operation of the input device (main soft key, auxiliary soft key) which is linked to a sense obtained when a scrolling operation is performed on a screen.

- 45 [0007] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, a plurality of icons each having a different function are displayed as the main-function icon, any one of these icons is selected by rotating the main soft key and the selected icon is confirmed by pressing the main soft key.

[0008] In the portable terminal described above, a plurality of icons are displayed on the display screen as the main-function icon, and one of these icons can be selected and confirmed by rotating and pressing the main soft key, so that operability of the device is further improved.

- 55 [0009] The portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention comprises a ten-key and a power key located below the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key on the control panel surface; and a flip having a size equivalent to the size of the ten-key and the power key which flip covers the ten-key and the power key, wherein ordinary operations are carried out using the main soft key or the auxiliary soft key while the flip is in a closed state.

[0010] In the portable terminal described above, the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key are generally operated while keeping the flip closed. Therefore, inconvenience of entering data with ten-key or the like can be eliminated.

[0011] The portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention comprises two the auxiliary soft keys of a first auxiliary soft key and a second auxiliary soft key; wherein functions are selected using the main soft key and the first and second auxiliary soft keys.

[0012] In the portable terminal described above, functions can be operated by two auxiliary soft keys of the first auxiliary soft key and the second auxiliary soft key, so that more functions can be allocated to these first and second auxiliary soft keys.

[0013] The portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention comprises a substantially cylindrical soft key provided in place of the main soft key and the first and second auxiliary soft keys, which cylindrical soft key is rotatably located below the display screen, the cylindrical soft key having a rotatable main soft key element which performs switching in response to pressing of the central section thereof, which main soft key element corresponds to the main soft key; and first and second auxiliary soft key elements each performing switching in response to pressing of the two edges of the cylindrical soft key, which first and second soft key elements corresponds to the first and second auxiliary soft keys respectively.

[0014] In the portable terminal described above, the functions of the above described main soft key and the first and second auxiliary soft keys are allocated to a single soft key. Therefore, the operability is further enhanced and the usability is significantly improved.

[0015] The portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention comprises a one-touch key used for one-touch operation when the portable terminal is to be connected to the Internet; wherein when the portable terminal is connected to the Internet, a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to the main soft key and a function having a higher frequency of use is allocated to the auxiliary soft key, and the functions allocated to the main and auxiliary soft keys are displayed near the respective keys as a main-function icon and an auxiliary-function icon respectively on the display screen.

[0016] In the portable terminal described above, connection to the Internet can be achieved instantly by pressing the one-touch key. When the portable terminal is connected to the Internet, a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to the main soft key so that this function can be selected by operating the main soft key. Further, a function having the next highest frequency of use is allocated to the auxiliary soft so that this function can be selected by operating the auxiliary soft key. Thus, most commonly used function can be selected with a very simple operation.

[0017] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, a plurality of browser icons each having a different browser function are displayed on the display screen when the portable terminal is connected to the Internet, and an arbitrary icon from these plurality of browser icons can be selected by operating any of the main soft key, or the first and second auxiliary soft keys.

[0018] In the portable terminal described above, a plurality of browser icons are displayed on the display screen when the portable terminal is connected to the Internet. An arbitrary icon out of the plurality of browser icons can be selected by a simple operation of the main soft key, or the first and second auxiliary soft keys.

[0019] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, a plurality of items are displayed on the display screen when a specified operation is performed using the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key, and an arbitrary item from these plurality of items can be selected by rotating operation of the main soft key.

[0020] In the portable terminal described above, a plurality of items are displayed on the display screen when a specified operation is performed using the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key and one item can be selected by operating the main soft key. Thus, a user can select an arbitrary item by a simple operation of the main soft key and auxiliary soft key while checking the screen display.

[0021] The portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention comprises a case having a control panel surface; a display screen located on the control panel surface of the case for displaying thereon information according to a communication mode; a substantially cylindrical soft key rotatably located below the display screen, which cylindrical soft key having a rotatable main soft key element which performs switching in response to pressing of the central section thereof; and first and second auxiliary soft key elements each performing switching in response to pressing of the two edges of the cylindrical soft key, wherein function allocated to the main soft key element and the first and second auxiliary soft keys elements are displayed near the respective elements as a main-function icon and first and second auxiliary function icons respectively in the lower portion on the display screen, and any of the main-function icon, or the first and second auxiliary-function icons can be selected by operating the cylindrical main soft key.

[0022] In the portable terminal described above, a single soft key having a main soft key element and first and second soft key element each having a different function is provided. Further, marks representing the functions allocated to the main soft key element and the first and second auxiliary soft keys elements are displayed near the main soft key element and the first and second auxiliary soft keys elements respectively on the display screen as a main-function icon and an auxiliary function icon. Therefore, number of required entry keys can be reduced, and because it is possible to operate the terminal with a signal soft key operability is significantly improved.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] Fig. 1 is a general plan view showing appearance of a mobile telephone 1 which is the portable terminal according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention; Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 3 is a flow chart for explaining a main operations of the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 4 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a redial processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 5 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a directory processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 6 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a register processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 7 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a character entry processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 8 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a mail processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 9 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in a call/receive mail processing in the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1; Fig. 10 is a general plan view showing appearance of a mobile telephone 20 which is the portable terminal according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention; Fig. 11 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10; Fig. 12 is a flow chart for explaining an Internet connection processing in the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10; Fig. 13 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in the Internet connection processing in the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10; Fig. 14 explains a correlation between a display screen and soft keys in the Internet connection processing in the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10; Fig. 15 is a view showing an icon group B_{G4} for a browser function as a whole in processing for connection to the Internet of the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10; Fig. 16 is a general plan view showing appearance of a mobile telephone 30 which is the portable terminal according to Embodiment 3 of the present invention; Fig. 17 is an enlarged view showing the configuration adjacent to a single roller soft key 31 in the mobile telephone 30 shown in Fig. 16; and Fig. 18 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 30 shown in Fig. 16.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

[0024] The present invention is described in detail below with reference to the attached drawings.

[0025] Fig. 1 is a plan view showing external configuration of the mobile telephone 1 as an example of the portable terminal according to Embodiment 1 of the present invention. As shown in this figure, an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display) display screen 2 is located on the top flat panel of a case for the mobile telephone 1. A specified frame appears on this LCD display screen 2 according to the modes in the mobile telephone 1. A main soft key 3 is located below this LCD display screen 2, and a first auxiliary soft key 4A and a second auxiliary soft key 4B are located on the two sides of the main soft key 3 respectively as operation keys. The main soft key 3 can be operated by the key rotating up or down and pressing it in the same way as clicking a mouse button of a computer. The first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B are operated by just pressing them.

[0026] Arranged below the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are ten-key and power/confirm key group 5 utilized for entry of numerals, English characters and Japanese Kana characters. A microphone 6 is provided below this ten-key and power/confirm key group 5. It should be noted that a speaker 7 is provided above the LCD display screen 2, and antenna 8 is provided at the edge section of the top edge surface of the case. Thus, this mobile telephone 1 enables making of a traditional telephone call using the microphone 6 and the speaker 7.

[0027] Herein, the soft keys as the main soft key 3, first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B are the keys whose functions change according to a set situation. The successively changing functions of these keys are displayed in a soft-key function display area 2A provided in the lower portion of the LCD display screen 2. This soft-key function display area 2A is provided right above the location of the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B. This allows the user to easily grasp the current functions allocated to the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B. Expressions corresponding to the main soft key 3, first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B appearing in the soft-key function display area 2A are displayed so as to recognize priorities assigned thereto visually with a blink of a position indicator or with color.

[0028] In this mobile telephone 1, a flip 9 rotatably attached through a hinge to the lower section of the case covers the ten-key and power/confirm key group 5. Therefore, only the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are visible from the user when using the mobile telephone 1 in a traditional manner. Thus, a designing effect can significantly be improved because only a smaller number of keys are arranged on the control surface. Even if multiple functions are provided in the mobile telephone 1, the most of operations can be realized utilizing the soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B which are visible all the time. This allows the usability for a user to significantly be improved.

[0029] Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 1 shown

In Fig. 1. In the figure, the same reference numerals are assigned to the sections corresponding to those in Fig. 1. In Fig. 2, a CPU (Central Processing Unit) 10 provides various controls such as display control and communication control in response to the operations performed utilizing the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B. The operation of the CPU 10 is described in detail later. A ROM (Read Only Memory) 11 stores therein computer programs executed in the CPU 10. Accordingly, the CPU 10 provides various controls such as display control and communication control based on these computer programs.

[0030] An LCD control circuit 12 provides controls for driving the LCD display screen 2, and controls the display on the LCD display screen 2 by receiving commands from the CPU 10. It should be noted that a transmitter/receiver section (not shown herein) for performing communications with a radio base station not shown herein through the antenna 8 (Refer to Fig. 1) is provided in the mobile telephone 1. This radio communication section performs data transaction such as audio data and text data under the control by the CPU 10.

[0031] Main operations of the mobile telephone 1 are described here while referring to the flow chart shown in Fig. 3. Then power of the mobile telephone 1 shown in Fig. 1 is turned ON, a screen showing an initial mode A0 appears in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2 as shown in Fig. 4 (A). In this initial mode A0, icons I_{A00} , I_{A01} , I_{A02} showing "Register", "Mail", "Menu" respectively are vertically arranged and displayed as functions corresponding to the main soft key 3 in the soft-key function display area 2A, and also icons I_{A03} , I_{A04} showing "Directory" and "Redial" respectively as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively are arranged and displayed on the two sides of the icon I_{A00} showing "Register".

[0032] In this condition, the CPU 10 (Refer to Fig. 2) proceeds the system control to step SA1 shown in Fig. 3, and determines whether "Redial" function (Icon I_{A04}) shown in Fig. 4 (A) is selected or not. More specifically, the CPU 10 determines whether the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to the "Redial" function is pressed by the user or not, and shifts the system control to step SA2 when a result of determination is affirmative. In the step SA2, the CPU 10 executes a redial processing in which a telephone call is made to a telephone number from which a telephone call has been received in the past, and then returns the system control to step SA1. This redial processing will be explained in detail later.

[0033] When the result of determination in step SA1 is negative, the CPU 10 shifts the system control to step SA3 and determines whether the "Directory" function (Icon I_{A03}) is selected or not. More specifically, the CPU 10 determines whether the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to the "Directory" function is pressed by the user or not, and shifts the system control to step SA4 when the result of determination is affirmative. In the step SA4, the CPU 10 executes the directory processing in which a search for information like names, types of telephones, telephone numbers each previously registered in a director by the user are searched or a telephone call is made according to the result of the search, and then the system control is again returned to step SA1. This directory processing will be explained in detail later.

[0034] When the result of determination in step SA3 is negative, the CPU 10 shifts the system control to step SA5 and determines whether the "Register" function (Icon I_{A00}) shown in Fig. 4 (A) is selected or not. More specifically, the CPU 10 determines whether the main soft key 3 is rotated in a downward direction in the figure and then pressed or not, and shifts the system control to step SA6 when the result of determination in step SA5 is affirmative. In step SA6, the CPU 10 executes the registration processing in which data such as name(s), telephone number(s), or email address(es) is newly registered or the existing data is corrected, and then the system control is returned again to step SA1. This registration processing will be explained in detail later.

[0035] When the result of determination in step SA5 is negative, the CPU 10 shifts the system control to step SA7 and determines whether the "Mail" function (Icon I_{A01}) shown in Fig. 4 (A) is selected or not. More specifically, the CPU 10 determines from the pressure applied to the main soft key 3 by the user whether the "Mail" (Icon I_{A01}) shown in Fig. 4 (A) is selected or not. When the result of determination in step SA7 is affirmative, the CPU 10 executes the mail processing in which an email is received or a new email message is created and sent by accessing a server terminal through the Internet or the like, and then the system control is returned again to step SA1. This mail processing will be explained in detail later. Finally, when the result of determination in step SA7 is negative, the CPU 10 returns the system control again to step SA1.

[0036] It will be explained here by taking the above mentioned processing for redial, directory, registration, and mail, and further character entry processing and telephone call as specific examples that most of the operations can be realized only by the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B in various modes by changing the functions allocated to the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B according to each mode when actually using the mobile telephone 1.

[0037] Fig. 4 (A) shows an initial mode A0 (Fig. 4 (A)) of the soft-key function display area 2A appearing as the initial mode on the LCD display screen 2 immediately after the power for the mobile telephone 1 is switched ON. In this initial mode A0, the icons I_{A00} , I_{A01} , I_{A02} showing "Register", "Mail", "Menu" are vertically arranged and respectively displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A as functions corresponding to the main soft key 3. Further, the icons I_{A03} , I_{A04} showing "Directory" and "Redial" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary

soft key 4B respectively are arranged and displayed on the two sides of the icon I_{A00} showing "Register" in the soft-key function display area 2A. In this initial mode A0, when the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Redial", the mode is shifted to a next mode i.e. a redial processing mode A1 (Fig. 4 (B)).

[0038] In this redial processing (Fig. 3: step SA2) mode A1, a list of telephone numbers from where telephone calls have been received recently and a cursor C_{A1} showing a selected location appear on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{A10} showing "Call" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{A11} showing "Clear" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed on the LCD display screen 2. The user can select a desired telephone number by rotating up or down the main soft key 3 to move the cursor C_{A1} up to the location of this desired telephone number. After selecting the telephone, when the main soft key 3 is pressed the mode shifts to calling mode A2 (Fig. 4 (C)). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B to select the icon I_{A11} , the CPU 10 executes the function of "Clear" and returns the system control to the above mentioned initial mode A0.

[0039] In the calling mode A2, the selected telephone number is dialed, the calling mode is effected, and conversation is started. At this stage, an icon I_{A20} showing "Menu" appears in the soft-key function display area 2A as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{A21} , I_{A22} showing "Record" and "Call release" also appear therein as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B. It is also displayed on the LCD display screen 2 that "volume" can be adjusted by rotating the main soft key 3 up and down.

[0040] In the calling mode A2, when the user presses the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Record", the mode is shifted to the next recording mode A3 (Fig. 4 (D)). When the user presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Menu" in the calling mode A2, the mode is shifted to menu selecting mode A4 (Fig. 4 (E)). Further, when the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Call release" in the calling mode A2, the call is released, and the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned initial mode A0.

[0041] When the mode shifts from the calling mode A2 to the recording mode A3 (Fig. 4 (D)), the current conversation is recorded. In this recording mode A3, icons I_{A30} , I_{A31} showing "Stop" and "Call release" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. Herein, when the user presses the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Stop" for stopping the recording mode, the mode is returned to the above mentioned calling mode A2. When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Call release", the call is released, and the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned initial mode A0.

[0042] When the mode shifts from the calling mode A2 to the menu selecting mode A4 (Fig. 4 (E)), a list of functions executable during a telephone call and the cursor C_{A4} showing a selected location appear on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{A40} showing "Select" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{A41} showing "Return" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed on the LCD display screen 2 at the same time. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{A4} up to a location of a desired menu and presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Select", the mode is shifted to the mode corresponding to the function selected by the cursor C_{A4} . When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Return", the mode is shifted to the above mentioned calling mode A2.

[0043] Thus, with the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when the redialing is performed, most of the main operations can be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows the usability for a user to greatly be improved.

[0044] Fig. 5 (A) is a view showing contents of the LCD display screen 2 several minutes after the power for the mobile telephone 1 is switched ON and the initial mode A0 (Fig. 4 (A)) appears. In this initial mode B0 (Fig. 5 (A)), only one line is displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. In this initial mode B0, an icon I_{B00} showing "Register" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 is displayed, and icons I_{B01} , I_{B02} showing "Directory" and "Redial" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A.

[0045] Herein, when the user presses the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Directory" indicating a function of calling up a telephone number of a name previously registered, the mode is shifted to the mode B1 corresponding to the directory processing (Fig. 5 (B)). In this directory processing (Fig. 3: step SA4) mode B1, the user can search a telephone number with a header alphabet of the registered name. Namely, Japanese katakana alphabets

・ア:a, カ:ka, サ:sa, タ:ta, ナ:na, ハ:ha, マ:ma,

ヤ:ya, ラ:ra, ワ:wa"

5 and the cursor C_{B1} showing a selected location are displayed on the LCD display screen 2.

[0046] Concurrently displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A is an icon I_{B10} showing "Up/Down Arrows" indicating selection of an up and down direction made by rotating the main soft key 3 as a function corresponding thereto, and icons I_{B11} , I_{B12} showing "Left Arrow" and "Right Arrow" respectively indicating selection of a right or left direction are displayed therein as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B. By rotating the main soft key 3 up or down and pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B, the movement of the cursor C_{B1} can be controlled. Namely, when a surname Tanaka

(田

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中:Japanese kanji)

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is to be searched, the cursor C_{B1} is first moved above the katakana alphabet

"タ:ta"

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by operating the second auxiliary soft key 4B and then the main soft key 3 is rotated downward, so that the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the directory mode B2 (Fig. 5 (C)).

[0047] In this directory mode B2, a list of the already registered names (e.g. Japanese Kanji name) and types of telephone machines (e.g. an ordinary telephone or a mobile telephone) and the cursor C_{B2} showing a selected location are displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{B20} showing "Enter" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{B21} showing "Clear" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates up and down the main soft key 3 to move the cursor C_{B2} up to a location of a name to which the user desires to make a telephone call and presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter" after the selection of the name, the mode is shifted to the next mode B3 (Fig. 5 (D)) of the processing for telephone. When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Clear" the mode is changed to the above mentioned initial mode B0.

[0048] When shifted to the directory processing mode B3, the selected name and the corresponding telephone number appear on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{B30} showing "Call" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{B31} showing "Clear" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are concurrently displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. Herein, when the user presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Call", the mode is shifted to the calling mode A2 as described with respect to Fig. 4 (C). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Clear" the mode is changed to the above mentioned initial mode B0.

[0049] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, even when a desired party is selected from the directory and a telephone call is made according to the directory processing, most of the main operations can be realized by the rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows the usability for a user to significantly be improved.

[0050] Fig. 6 (A) shows registration mode C0 shifted thereto after the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Register" indicating a function of registering a telephone number or an email is pressed in the initial mode A0 in Fig. 4. In this registration processing (Fig. 3: step SA6) mode C0, a screen with two options of "Directory" and "Mail" as a type for new registration and a cursor C_{C0} showing a selected location are displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{C00} showing "Enter" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{C01} showing "Return" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are concurrently displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{B2} up to a desired item and then presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the registration mode C1 (Fig. 6 (B)). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Return" the mode is shifted to the above mentioned initial mode A0 (Fig. 4 (A)).

[0051] In the registration mode C1, a screen showing two options of "Newly Register" and "Correct" and a cursor C_{C0} showing a selected location are displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{C10} showing "Ent r" as a function

corresponding to the main soft key 3 and an icon I_{C11} showing "Return" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{C1} above a desired item and then presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. registration mode C2 (Fig. 6 (C)). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Return" the mode is shifted to the above mentioned registration mode C0.

[0052] In the registration mode C2, a tab T_{C2} where a name may be entered, and "Next Screen" which indicates that next screen can be displayed by rotating the main soft key 3 in the downward direction is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. Concurrently displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A is an icon I_{C20} showing "Enter" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{C21} , I_{C22} showing "Left Arrow" and "Right Arrow" respectively as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively. When the user enters characters according to a method described later in Fig. 7 in the tab T_{C2} and rotates the main soft key 3 downward, the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the registration mode C3 (Fig. 6 (D)).

[0053] In this registration mode C3, in the same manner as the registration mode C2, a tab T_{C3} where a telephone number may be entered, and icons I_{C30} , I_{C31} , I_{C32} showing "Enter", "Left Arrow", and "Right Arrow" are also displayed as functions corresponding to the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively. After entering the telephone number in the tab T_{C3} and then pressing the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned registration mode C0.

[0054] When "Mail" is selected in the registration mode C0, the registration modes C1, C2 are processed first, and then the screen is shifted to the next mode i.e. registration mode C4 (Fig. 6 (E)) where a screen for inputting an email address is displayed. In this registration mode C4, in the same manner as the above mentioned registration mode C2, a tab T_{C4} where an email address can be entered and icons I_{C40} , I_{C41} , I_{C42} showing "Enter", "Left Arrow", and "Right Arrow" are displayed as functions corresponding to the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively. After entering the email address in the tab T_{C4} and then pressing the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned registration mode C0.

[0055] When "Correct" is selected in the registration mode C1, a registration mode C5 (Fig. 6 (F)) having a screen with the same appearance as the directory processing mode B1 explained with respect to Fig. 5 (B) appears on the LCD display screen 2. In this mode, when a Japanese katakana character at the header of the name of the registered person is selected by operating the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A, and the second auxiliary soft key 4B, the next mode i.e. the registration mode C6 (Fig. 6 (G)) having a screen with the same appearance as the directory processing mode B2 explained with respect to Fig. 5 (B) appears on the LCD display screen 2. Further, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 to move a cursor C_{C6} above the name of the person whose data is to be corrected in this registration mode C6 and then presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter" (icon I_{C60}), the mode shifts to the next mode i.e. the registration mode C7 (Fig. 6 (H)). Then the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Clear" (icon I_{C61}) the mode is shifted to the above mentioned initial mode C0.

[0056] In the registration mode C7, name of the person whose data is to be corrected, his/her telephone number(s) and email address(es), and a cursor C_{C7} showing a selected location appear on the screen. The cursor C_{C7} may be moved to the item to be corrected by rotating the main soft key 3 up or down. For example, when the telephone number is to be corrected, by pressing the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Correct" at the location of the telephone number to be corrected, the mode is shifted to the above mentioned registration mode C3, and returns to the original Register mode C7 after the correction of the telephone number. When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Clear" the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned initial mode C0.

[0057] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when the registration processing of registering a new data or a correction of an already existing data in the directory is performed, most of the main operations can be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A or the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows the usability for a user to significantly be improved.

[0058] When characters are to be entered like in the registration mode C2 explained with respect to Fig. 6 (C), a character entry initial mode D0 (Fig. 7 (A)) having a screen where characters can be entered is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. For example, when

「時間」

(jikan, meaning time) is to be input, then the Japanese hiragana characters are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Then, by operating either the first auxiliary soft key 4A or the second auxiliary soft key 4B a character in any of the left or right direction is selected, and by rotating the main soft key 3 in up or down direction a character in any of the up or right direction can be selected. By pressing the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter" after bringing the cursor on the character to be entered, this particular character is displayed in the sentence

displayed above.

[0059] A space may be inserted between the characters by moving the cursor over S and pressing the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter". The cursor may be moved backward by moving the cursor over B and pressing the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter". When all the characters required for kana to kanji conversion are entered as shown in the character entry mode D1 (Fig. 7 (B)) then kana-kanji conversion can be performed by pressing the convert key in the above mentioned ten-key and power/confirm key group 5 and the mode shifts to next mode i.e. the character entry mode D2 (Fig. 7 (C)).

[0060] In the character entry mode D2, a first candidate after the kana is converted to kanji is displayed. If the kanji(s) is not the appropriate one, then a different kanji(s) is displayed each time the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Next Candidate" is pressed. When the appropriate kanji(s) is displayed then this kanji(s) can be confirmed by pressing the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter". Further, when the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Return" is pressed then the character entry screen is closed.

[0061] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when characters are to be entered, most of the main operations can be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A or the second auxiliary soft key 4B. This allows characters to be entered with extremely simple operations and the usability for a user to more significantly be improved as compared to the method of the conventional technology in which a plurality of alphabets are allocated to each key of the ten-key respectively in the ten-key and power/confirm key group 5 and selection is made by pressing these keys a multiple time.

[0062] In the initial mode A0 described above in Fig. 4, by rotating the main soft key 3, the icon I_{A01} for "Mail" indicating an email is displayed in the lowest location of the three icons I_{A00} , I_{A01} , I_{A02} corresponding to the main soft key 3, and then by pressing the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted to mode E0 (Fig. 8 (A)) of Mail processing (Fig. 3: step SA). In this mail processing mode E0, a screen having two options of "Read the Mail" and "Write a Mail" and a cursor C_{E0} showing a selected location appear on the display. An icon I_{E00} showing "Enter" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and an icon I_{E01} showing "Return" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{E0} before a desired item and presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter" at the location of, for example, "Read Mail", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the mail processing mode E1 (Fig. 8 (B)). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Return" the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned initial mode A0 (Fig. 4 (A)).

[0063] In the mail processing mode E1, a portion of the emails in the list of received mails and a cursor C_{E1} showing a selected location are displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{E10} showing "Read" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and an icon I_{E11} showing "Delete" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{E1} above a desired item and presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Read", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the mail processing mode E2 (Fig. 8 (C)). By pressing the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Delete", a corresponding unrequited mail may be deleted.

[0064] In the mail processing mode E2, message in the selected mail is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{E20} showing "Up/Down" directions as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{E21} , I_{E22} showing "Reply" and "Transfer" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user presses the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Reply", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the mail processing mode E3 (Fig. 8 (D)). By pressing the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Transfer", the mode is shifted to the create mail mode E4 (Fig. 8 (E)).

[0065] When shifted to the create mail mode E4 for transferring an email, a screen having the read message displayed thereon other than the email address appears on the LCD display screen 2. When the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter" is pressed at the location of "Write a Mail" in the initial mode E0 and the mode is shifted to the create mail mode E4, fields for items of "Address", "Title", and "Message" appear on the LCD display screen 2 as display for creating a message. An icon I_{E40} showing "Write" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{E41} , I_{E42} showing "Send" and "Address" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Address", the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the create mail mode E5 (Fig. 8 (F)) via the processing of selecting an email address from the directory according to the directory processing mode B1 explained with respect to Fig. 5.

[0066] In this create mail mode E5, "Name" and "Address" corresponding to data before and after a selected name in directory are displayed on the LCD display screen 2, and a cursor C_{E5} showing a selected location is also displayed. An icon I_{E50} showing "Enter" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and an icon I_{E51} showing "Clear" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are also displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 to move the cursor C_{E5} above the address

of a party to whom an email is to be sent and then presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Enter", the mode is returned to the above mentioned create mail mode E4, and the email address of the selected party to whom an email is to be sent appears on the screen.

[0067] In the create mail mode E4, when the character entry processing in Fig. 7 is executed, entry of a message is complete, and the first auxiliary soft key 4A showing "Send" is pressed, the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the send mail E6 (Fig. 6 (G)). By operating the first auxiliary soft key 4A showing "Clear", the mode is returned to the mail processing mode E2 where emails can be read. In the send mail mode E6, a notice that the mail is being sent to the desired email address appears on the display screen 2. An icon I_{E60} showing "Call Release" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B is displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. When no key is operated when the email is being sent, then the mail is sent and the mode is automatically returned to the above mentioned initial mode E0. By pressing the second auxiliary soft key 4B showing "Call Release" during sending of the email, sending of the email is terminated and again the mode is returned to the initial mode E0.

[0068] It should be noted that, when the mode is shifted from the mail processing mode E2 where an email is read to the mail processing mode E3 where email is sent, the title and message with a reference symbol ">" added thereto are displayed on the LCD display screen 2 as information for the mail as an object for reply. An icon I_{E20} showing "Up/Down" directions as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{E31}, I_{E32} showing "Send" and "Clear" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. Herein, when the user rotates the main soft key 3 up or down to decide a location where a document is inputted and presses the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted to one in Fig. 7 where characters are entered, and returned again to this mail processing mode E3 after entry of characters. When characters are entered and the first auxiliary soft key 4A showing "Send" is pressed, the mode is shifted to the send mail mode E6 described above. By operating the second auxiliary soft key 4B showing "Clear", the mode is returned to the mail processing mode E2 where the emails can be read.

[0069] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when entering the characters for reading, creating, replying, and transferring a email messages or the like, most of the main operations can be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows mail processing to be executed with extremely simple operations and the usability for a user to significantly be improved.

[0070] For example, when a telephone number is entered with the ten-key in the ten-key and power/confirm key group 5 in the initial mode A0 (Fig. 4 (A)), the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the transmission mode F0 (Fig. 9 (A)). This entered telephone number is displayed on the LCD display screen 2 in this transmission mode F0. It should be noted that, when the entered telephone number has previously been registered in the directory, the corresponding name may be displayed thereon. An icon I_{F00} showing "Call" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and an icon I_{F01} showing "Clear" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. At this stage, the display of "Call" corresponding to the main soft key 3 is blinked, which tells the user that the key is preferential. When the user presses the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted to the calling mode B3 described above with respect to Fig. 5. When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Clear" the mode is shifted back to the above mentioned initial mode A0.

[0071] When a telephone call is received from outside, all the operations are suspended, and the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the reception mode F1 (Fig. 9(B)). In this reception mode F1, the telephone number of the received telephone call is displayed, and when this number has already been registered in the telephone book the corresponding name of the calling party is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{F10} showing "Call" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{F11}, I_{F12} showing "Message" and "Hold" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. At this stage, the display of "Call" corresponding to the main soft key 3 is blinked, which tells the user that the key is preferential. When the user presses the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted to the calling mode B3 described above with respect to Fig. 5. By pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Message", the mode is shifted to a mode where the message may be recorded, and then the mode is returned to the initial mode A0. By pressing the second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Hold", the message telling the calling party to hold is transmitted to the calling party. By pressing the main soft key 3, the mode is shifted to the calling mode B3 described above with respect to Fig. 5.

[0072] When a mail is received, all the operations are suspended, and the mode is shifted to the next mode i.e. the mail reception processing mode F2 (Fig. 9 (C)). In this mail reception mode F2, information showing the sender's email address and a message telling that an email has arrived is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{F20} showing "Later" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and icons I_{F21}, I_{F22} showing "Read" and "Delete" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. When the user presses the main soft key 3 corresponding to "Later", the mode is returned to the previously operating mode. By pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A corresponding to "Read", the mode is shifted to mode where a mail message filled with characters is displayed in the create mail mode E4 in Fig. 8. Further, by pressing the

second auxiliary soft key 4B corresponding to "Delete", the arrived mail is deleted.

[0073] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when the telephone call is made or received, and further an email is received, most of the main operations can be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A or the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows the process of making or receiving of telephone calls, or receiving of emails to be realized with extremely simple operations and the usability for a user to significantly be improved. By explicitly displaying functions required for operations and a preferential relation among the functions with blinking of the display, color or a positional relation so that the order of importance thereamong can easily be specified, so that the user can operate the functions corresponding to each key without any confusion.

[0074] Fig. 10 is a plan view showing external configuration of the mobile telephone 20 as an example of the portable terminal according to Embodiment 2 of the present invention. In this figure, the same reference numerals are assigned to the sections corresponding to those in Fig. 1, and description thereof is omitted herein. As shown in Fig. 2, an information key 21 is newly provided in the mobile telephone 20. This information key 21 is provided at the central section of the top surface of the flip 9, and when this key is pressed a connection to the Internet (Internet connection processing) is realized with one touch.

[0075] The Internet connection processing herein is a processing for accessing, through a radio line or the Internet, a host terminal connected to the Internet by using a function of radio communication provided in the mobile telephone 20. The Internet connection processing will be explained in detail later. The basic operations in the mobile telephone 20 are the same as that (the redial, directory, register, mail, and character entry processing or the like) in the mobile telephone 1 described above, and so detailed description thereof is omitted herein.

[0076] Fig. 11 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10. In this figure, the same reference numerals are assigned to the sections corresponding to those in Fig. 2, and description thereof is omitted herein. In Fig. 11, the information key 21 (Refer to Fig. 10) is newly provided therein, and the CPU 10 executes the Internet connection processing when a user presses this information key 21. The computer programs required for Internet connection processing are also stored in the ROM 11.

[0077] Next, the Internet connection processing is described while referring to Fig. 12. When power of the mobile telephone 20 shown in Fig. 10 is turned ON, a screen of an initial mode G0 appears in the soft-key function display area 2A on the LCD display screen 2 as shown in Fig. 13 (A). Namely, in this initial mode A0, an icon I_{G00} showing "Menu" is displayed as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 in the soft-key function display area 2A, and also icons I_{G01}, I_{G02} showing "Directory" and "Redial" as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B respectively are arranged and displayed on the two sides of the icon I_{G00} showing "Menu".

[0078] In such a state, when the information key 21 (Refer to Fig. 10) is pressed by the user in step SB1 shown in Fig. 12, the CPU 10 (Refer to Fig. 11) executes processes after step SB2 and on. Namely, when the information key 21 is pressed, the mode is shifted from the initial mode A0 to the next mode i.e. the Internet processing (Fig. 13 (B)) mode G1. In this mode G1, a list of host terminals as destinations for access through the Internet is displayed on the LCD display screen 2. As an example, a list of six host terminals of "Host 1" to "Host 6" has been displayed in the figure.

[0079] An icon I_{G10} showing "Select" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3, and an icon I_{G11} showing "Return" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A on the LCD display screen 2. The "Select" indicates selection of a host terminal out of "Host 1" to "Host 6" by moving a cursor C_{G1} over the desired host. When the user selects a desired host terminal by rotating the main soft key 3 up or down to move the cursor C_{G1} over desired host terminal (step SB2). Assuming that "Host 1" is to be selected, the user moves the cursor C_{G1} over the location of "Host 1" and presses the main soft key 3.

[0080] When the host terminal is selected, the mode is shifted from the mode G1 (Fig. 13 (B)) to the mode G2 (Fig. 13 (C)), and connect with the Internet is established (step SB3). When the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B in order to select the icon I_{G11}, the mode is returned from the mode G1 to the above mentioned initial mode G0 (Fig. 13 (A)). When shifted to the mode G2 of Internet connection processing, access to the selected "Host 1" is made through the Internet. An icon I_{G20} showing "Disconnect" as a function corresponding to the main soft key 3 is displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A. It should be noted that, when the main soft key 3 is pressed in order to select "Disconnect" then the Internet connection processing is terminated.

[0081] When the access to "Host 1" is established, the mode is shifted from the mode G2 to mode G3 (Fig. 13 (D)), and data is read from "Host 1". In this mode G3, an icon I_{G31} showing an amount of data read is displayed according to a length of a bar on the LCD display screen 2. An icon I_{G30} showing "Call Release" as a function corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B is displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A on the LCD display screen 2. It should be noted that, when the second auxiliary soft key 4B is pressed in order to select "Call Release", the Call-Release processing is executed, and the mode is shifted from the mode G3 to the above mentioned initial mode G0 (Fig. 13 (A)).

[0082] When reading data from "Host 1" is complete, the mode is shifted from the mode G3 to mode G4 (Fig. 13 (E)), and a main menu for searching information obtained from the read data is displayed on the LCD display screen 2 (step SB4). As an example, total six items of "1 News", "2 Town information", "3 Weather information", "4 Amusement",

"5 Communication", and "6 Travel" are displayed on the LCD display screen 2 at this stage as the items of the main menu as shown in Fig. 13 (E).

[0083] A browser-function icon group B_{G4} comprising browser-function items displayed with icons are displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A on the LCD display screen 2. As shown in Fig. 15, the browser-function icon group B_{G4} consists of nine items such as an icon I_{G40} , an icon I_{G41} , . . . , and an icon I_{G48} , and is configured in a loop so that the icon I_{G40} and icon I_{G48} are linked to each other. Displayed in the soft-key function display area 2A on the LCD display screen 2 shown in Fig. 13 (E) are five icons of the icon I_{G40} , icon I_{G41} , . . . , and the icon I_{G44} of the browser-function icon group B_{G4} shown in Fig. 15.

[0084] In the mode G4, the user selects a desired item out of the six items in the main menu by rotating the main soft key 3 up or down in order to move the cursor C_{G4} over the desired host terminal (step SB4). In this case, assuming that the item "1 News" is to be selected, then the user moves the cursor C_{G4} above the item "1 News" and presses the main soft key 3.

[0085] When an item from the main menu is selected, the mode is shifted from the mode G4 (Fig. 13 (E)) to the mode G5 (Fig. 13 (F)), and a sub menu obtained by further classifying the selected item "1 News" into small items is displayed on the LCD display screen 2 (step SB5). As an example, total six items of "1 Professional Baseball", "2 Professional Football", "3 State of Florida", "4 Department of Justice", "5 Stock Exchange", and "6 American box office" are displayed on the LCD display screen 2 at this stage as a items of the sub menu as shown in Fig. 13 (F).

[0086] In this mode G5, the user selects a desired item from the sub menu of the six items by rotating the main soft key 3 up or down in order to move a cursor C_{G5} over the location of the desired host terminal (step SB5). In this case, assuming that the item "6 American box office" is to be selected, the user moves the cursor C_{G5} over the item "6 American box office" as shown in Fig. 14 (A) and presses the main soft key 3.

[0087] When the user selects an item from the sub menu as described above, the mode is shifted from mode G6 (Fig. 14 (A)) to a mode G7 (Fig. 14 (B)), and "Titanic on top . . . 22:00" which is the contents corresponding to the item "6 American box office" is displayed on the LCD display screen 2 (step SB6).

[0088] Then, in the mode G7, when a desired icon is selected by the user out of the browser-function icon group B_{G4} , the browser processing described later (step SB7) is performed. More specifically, assuming that the icon I_{G47} corresponding to bookmark is to be selected from the browser-function icon group B_{G4} shown in Fig. 15, then the browser-function icon group B_{G4} as a whole is shifted in the right direction or the left direction by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A or the second auxiliary soft key 4B such that the icon I_{G47} appears at the position of the cursor C_{G7} located at the central portion of the soft-key function display area 2A.

[0089] Namely, the browser-function icon group B_{G4} is shifted in the left direction each time the user presses the second auxiliary soft key 4B, with which the icon positioned at the cursor C_{G7} is changed in the order of icon I_{G42} to icon I_{G43} to icon I_{G44} On the other hand, when the first auxiliary soft key 4A is pressed, the browser-function icon group B_{G4} is shifted in the right direction. It should be noted that, conversely, the moving direction of the group may be changed so that the browser-function icon group B_{G4} is shifted in the left direction by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A while the browser-function icon group B_{G4} is shifted in the right direction by pressing the second auxiliary soft key 4B.

[0090] Then, as mode G8 shown in Fig. 14 (C), when the icon I_{G47} (bookmark) is positioned at the cursor C_{G7} , the user presses the main soft key 3 to select this icon I_{G47} . Then the mode is shifted from the mode G8 to a mode G9 shown in Fig. 14 (D). In this mode G9, a bookmark M_{G9} indicating that the icon I_{G47} is selected appears on the LCD display screen 2 as shown in Fig. 14 (D).

[0091] Then the user presses the first auxiliary soft key 4A once to select the icon I_{G46} corresponding to information from the browser-function icon group B_{G4} . With this, the mode is shifted from the mode G9 to a mode G10 shown in Fig. 14 (E) in which the icon I_{G46} is positioned at the cursor C_{G7} . In this mode G10, when the main soft key 3 is pressed by the user, the mode is shifted from the mode G10 to a mode G11 shown in Fig. 14 (F). In this mode G11, a bookmark M_{G11} is displayed on the right of the item "1 News" in the sub menu explained with respect to the mode G4 (Fig. 13 (E)) on the LCD display screen 2. When information key 21 is pressed during this mode G11 (step SB8), the Internet connection processing is terminated, and the mode is shifted from this mode G11 to the above mentioned initial mode G0.

[0092] With the mobile telephone 1 as described above, when the Internet is to be accessed, one-touch operation with the information key 21 allows a connection to the Internet to be established, and most of the main operations can also be realized by rotating and pressing the main soft key 3, and the following operations can be realized by pressing the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B, which allows the usability for a user to significantly be improved.

[0093] Fig. 16 is a perspective view showing external configuration of a mobile telephone 30 as an example of the portable terminal according to Embodiment 3 of the present invention, and shows a state in which the flip 9 is open. Fig. 17 is an enlarged view showing the configuration adjacent to a single roller soft key 31 shown in Fig. 16. Fig. 18 is a block diagram showing electrical configuration of the key section of the mobile telephone 30. In Figs. 16, 17, and 18, the same reference numerals are assigned to the sections corresponding to those in Figs. 1, 4 (A), and 2, and descrip-

tion thereof is omitted herein. In Fig. 16, a single roller soft key 31 having substantially a cylindrical shape is provided in place of the main soft key 3, first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B shown in Fig. 1.

[0094] This single roller soft key 31 is a key for realizing each functions of the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B (Refer to Fig. 1) as described above by one roller-like body. Namely, the single roller soft key 31 has a single roller body which is rotatably provided below the LCD display screen 2 such that the roller body can be rotated in the Z direction (direction along the circumference of the roller). This single roller soft key 31 can be operated by pressing in the same manner as clicking a mouse button similarly to that of the main soft key 3. In the single roller soft key 31, a main soft key section 31C is a section corresponding to the main soft key 3 (Refer to Fig. 1). A first auxiliary soft key section 31A is a section corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key 4A (Refer to Fig. 1) and a second auxiliary soft key section 31B is a section corresponding to the second auxiliary soft key 4B.

[0095] Namely, when power of the mobile telephone 30 shown in Fig. 16 is turned ON, a screen showing an initial mode appears in the soft-key function display area 2A of the LCD display screen 2 as shown in Fig. 17. In this initial mode, icons I_{A00} , I_{A01} , I_{A02} showing "Register", "Mail", "Menu" respectively are vertically arranged and displayed as functions corresponding to the main soft key section 31C of the single roller soft key 31 in the soft-key function display area 2A. Further, icons I_{A03} , I_{A04} showing "Directory" and "Redial" respectively as functions corresponding to the first auxiliary soft key section 31A and the second auxiliary soft key section 31B respectively are arranged and displayed on the two sides of the icon I_{A00} showing "Register".

[0096] Accordingly, when a desired icon is selected out of the icons I_{A00} , I_{A01} , I_{A02} , after the single roller soft key 31 is rotated up or down, the main soft key section 31C may be pressed in the same manner as that for the main soft key 3. Similarly, the first auxiliary soft key section 31A may be pressed when the icon I_{A03} showing "Directory" is to be selected, and the second auxiliary soft key section 31B may be pressed when the icon I_{A04} showing "Redial" is to be selected. It should be noted that the method of operation with the single roller soft key 31 is the same as that in Embodiments 1 and 2, so that description thereof is omitted herein.

[0097] With the mobile telephone 30 as described above, as the functions of the main soft key 3, the first auxiliary soft key 4A and the second auxiliary soft key 4B are provided to the single roller soft key 31 comprising a single roller body, the main and the following operations can be realized by one unit of single roller soft key 31 even when the process of making or receiving of telephone calls, or receiving of emails is to be performed, which allows the usability for a user to dramatically be improved.

[0098] Although the present invention has been described with respect to Embodiments 1 to 3 for a complete and clear disclosure, the appended claims are not to be thus limited but are to be construed as embodying all modifications and alternative constructions that may occur to one skilled in the art which fairly fall within the basic teaching herein set forth. For example, in Embodiments 1 to 3, the mobile telephones 1, 20 and 30 have been described as examples of the portable terminal according to the present invention. However, the present invention is not limited to a mobile telephone, and the invention may be applied to a PHS (Personal Handy phone System) terminal or a personal digital assistant having a communication function.

[0099] As described above, in the invention, a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to the main soft key for each communication mode, a function having the next highest frequency of use is allocated to the auxiliary soft key, and marks representing the functions are displayed on the locations corresponding to the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key of the display screen as a main-function icon and an auxiliary-function icon. Thus, a number of entry keys can be reduced and a large-sized entry key with high usability can be provided, which allows downsizing and realization of multi-functional system in the portable terminal. Further, operations can be performed without using the manual, and operability can be improved by an input device (main and auxiliary soft keys) linked to a sense obtained when a scrolling operation is performed on a screen. Accordingly, a multi-functional system can be realized with a minimum number of entry key to achieve downsizing, which allows the usability of the portable terminal for a user to significantly be improved.

[0100] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, when a plurality of icons are displayed on a display screen as the main-function icon, one of these icons can be selected and confirmed by rotating and pressing the main soft key. Therefore, selection of one icon out of a plurality of icons can be made with an easy operation, and the operability and usability of the portable terminal for a user can further be improved.

[0101] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, ordinary operations of the main soft key and the auxiliary soft key are carried out while the flip is closed. Therefore, with the portable terminal according to the invention the operability can further significantly be improved.

[0102] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, functions can be operated by two auxiliary soft keys of the first auxiliary soft key and the second auxiliary soft key. Therefore, more functions can be allocated to the first and second auxiliary soft keys. Accordingly, in the portable terminal according to the invention, the operability is not affected by the fact that a large number of functions are allocated to the keys.

[0103] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, the functions of the main soft key and first and second auxiliary soft keys are provided to a single soft key. Therefore, three operational functions can

be realized with a single key operation so that the operability and usability of the portable terminal can further significantly be improved.

[0104] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, by operating only the one-touch key a connection with the Internet can be achieved. Further during the Internet connection, a function having the highest frequency of use can be selected by operating the main soft key, and a function having the next highest frequency of use can be selected by operating the auxiliary soft key. Therefore, operability of the portable terminal can significantly be improved even during the Internet connection. In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, a plurality of browser icons are displayed on the display screen during the Internet connection. Therefore, one icon can be selected out of the plurality of browser icons by a simple operation with the main soft key, the first or second auxiliary soft keys.

[0105] With the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, even when any arbitrary item out of a plurality of items displayed on the display screen is to be selected, the item can be selected only by a simple operation with the main soft key and auxiliary soft key.

[0106] In the portable terminal according to another aspect of the present invention, a single soft key having three operational functions is provided therein. Further, marks representing the functions are displayed on locations of the display screen corresponding to the main soft key element and first and second auxiliary soft keys elements as a main-function icon and first and second auxiliary-function icons respectively. Therefore, number of entry keys can be reduced and also an operation with a signal soft key is possible, which allows the operability of the portable device to further significantly be improved.

INDUSTRIAL APPLICABILITY

[0107] As described above, the portable terminal according to the present invention is useful to a portable type of communication equipment with a large number of functions provided therein.

Claims

1. A portable terminal comprising:

a case having a control panel surface;
a display screen located on said control panel surface of said case for displaying thereon information according to a communication mode;
a main soft key located below said display screen, with which main soft key a rotating operation as well as a pressing operation can be performed; and
an auxiliary soft key located by the side of said main soft key, with which auxiliary soft key a pressing operation can be performed;
wherein a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to said main soft key for each communication mode and a function having a higher frequency of use is allocated to said auxiliary soft key, and marks representing the functions allocated to said main and auxiliary soft keys are displayed near the respective keys as a main-function icon and an auxiliary-function icon respectively on said display screen.

2. A portable terminal according to Claim 1; wherein a plurality of icons each having a different function are displayed as the main-function icon, any one of these icons is selected by rotating said main soft key and the selected icon is confirmed by pressing said main soft key.

3. A portable terminal according to Claim 1 further comprising: a ten-key and a power key located below said main soft key and said auxiliary soft key on said control panel surface; and

a flip having a size equivalent to the size of said ten-key and said power key which flip covers said ten-key and said power key,
wherein ordinary operations are carried out using said main soft key or said auxiliary soft key while said flip is in a closed state.

4. A portable terminal according to Claim 1 comprises two said auxiliary soft keys of a first auxiliary soft key and a second auxiliary soft key; wherein functions are selected using said main soft key and said first and second auxiliary soft keys.

5. A portable terminal according to Claim 4 comprising:

a substantially cylindrical soft key provided in place of said main soft key and said first and second auxiliary soft keys, which cylindrical soft key is rotatably located below said display screen,
 said cylindrical soft key having a rotatable main soft key element which performs switching in response to pressing of the central section thereof, which main soft key element corresponds to said main soft key; and first and second auxiliary soft key elements each performing switching in response to pressing of the two edges of said cylindrical soft key, which first and second soft key elements corresponds to said first and second auxiliary soft keys respectively.

6. A portable terminal according to Claim 1; wherein a plurality of items are displayed on said display screen when a specified operation is performed using said main soft key and said auxiliary soft key, and an arbitrary item from these plurality of items can be selected by rotating operation of said main soft key.
7. A portable terminal according to Claim 1 comprising a one-touch key used for one-touch operation when the portable terminal is to be connected to the Internet;
 wherein when the portable terminal is connected to the Internet, a function having the highest frequency of use is allocated to said main soft key and a function having a higher frequency of use is allocated to said auxiliary soft key, and the functions allocated to said main and auxiliary soft keys are displayed near the respective keys as a main-function icon and an auxiliary-function icon respectively on said display screen.
8. A portable terminal according to Claim 7; wherein a plurality of browser icons each having a different browser function are displayed on said display screen when the portable terminal is connected to the Internet, and an arbitrary icon from these plurality of browser icons can be selected by operating any of said main soft key, or said first and second auxiliary soft keys.
9. A portable terminal according to Claim 7; wherein a plurality of items are displayed on said display screen when a specified operation is performed using said main soft key and said auxiliary soft key, and an arbitrary item from these plurality of items can be selected by rotating operation of said main soft key.
10. A portable terminal comprising:
 - a case having a control panel surface;
 - a display screen located on said control panel surface of said case for displaying thereon information according to a communication mode;
 - a substantially cylindrical soft key rotatably located below said display screen, which cylindrical soft key having a rotatable main soft key element which performs switching in response to pressing of the central section thereof; and first and second auxiliary soft key elements each performing switching in response to pressing of the two edges of said cylindrical soft key,
 - wherein function allocated to said main soft key element and said first and second auxiliary soft keys elements are displayed near the respective elements as a main-function icon and first and second auxiliary function icons respectively in the lower portion on said display screen, and any of the main-function icon, or the first and second auxiliary-function icons can be selected by operating said cylindrical main soft key.

FIG.1

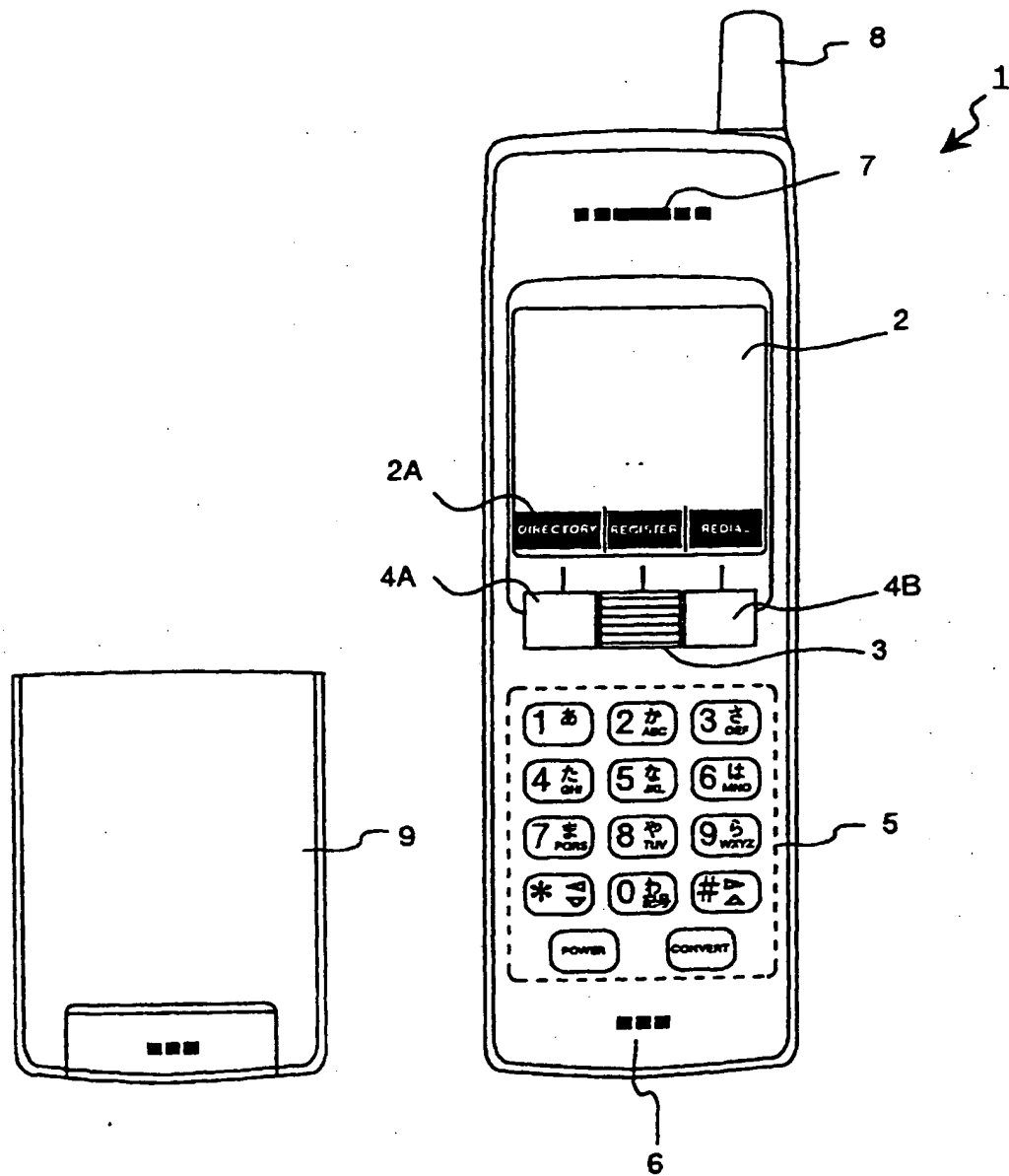


FIG.2

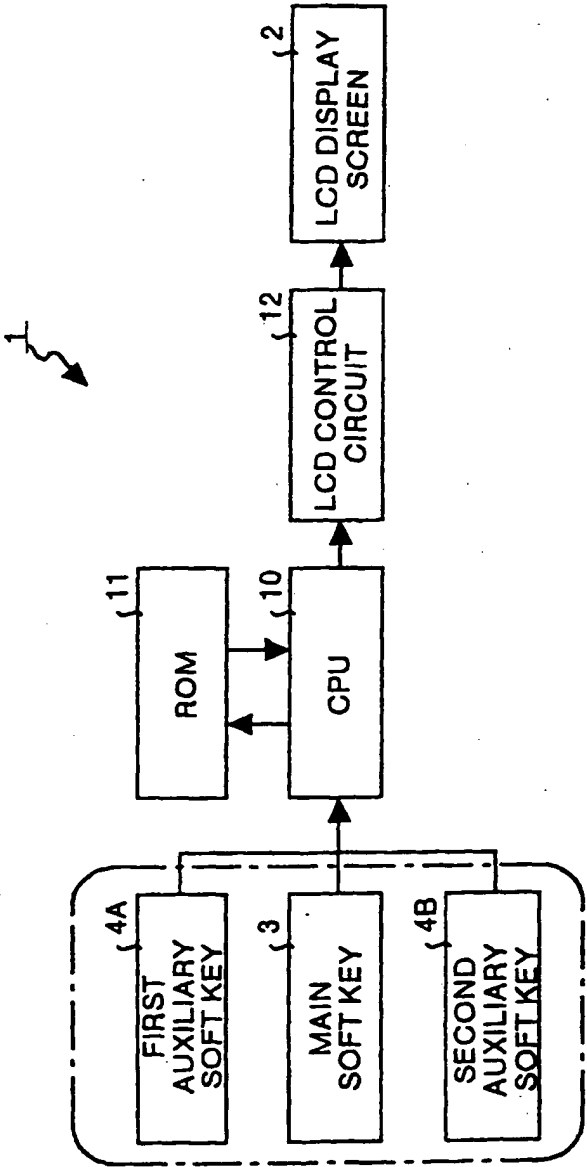


FIG.3

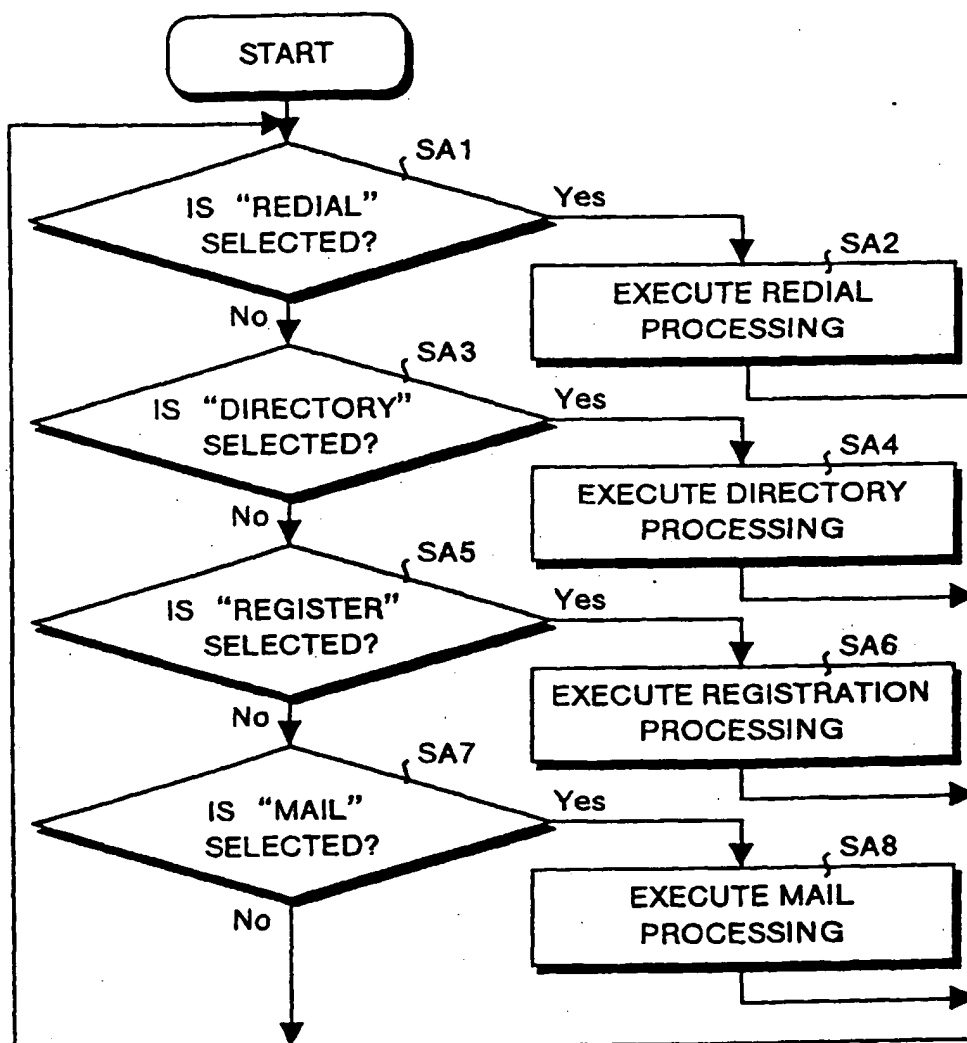
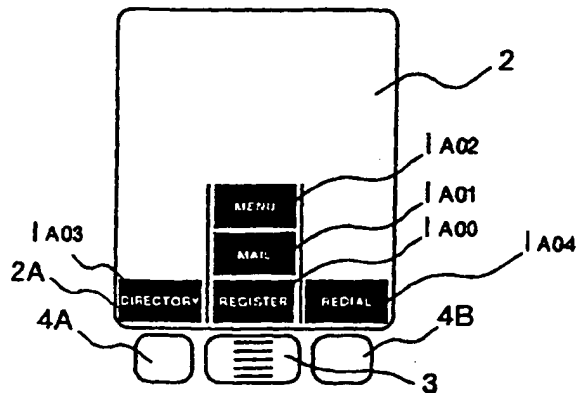
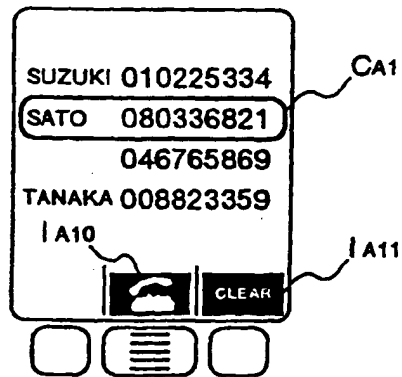


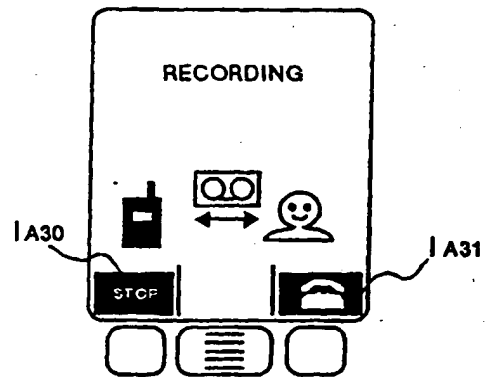
FIG.4



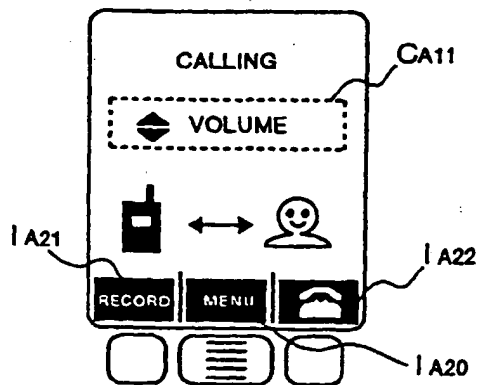
(A) DIAL 1 (SOFT KEY IN INITIAL MODE A0)



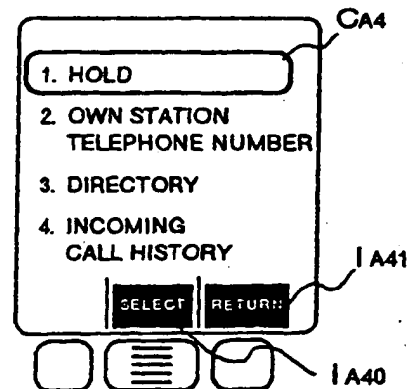
(B) DIAL 2 (SOFT KEY IN MODE A1)



(D) DIAL 4 (SOFT KEY IN MODE A3)

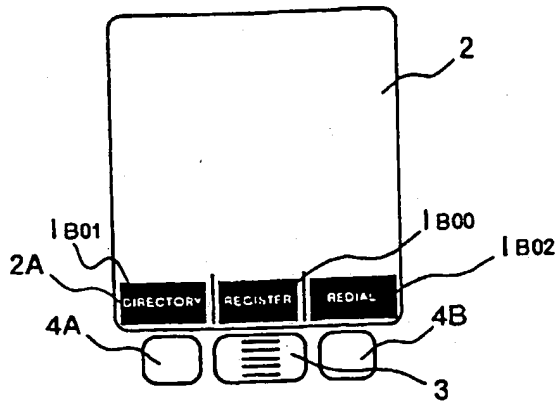


(C) DIAL 3 (SOFT KEY IN MODE A2)

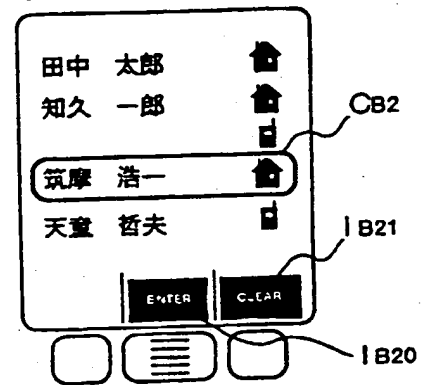


(E) DIAL 5 (SOFT KEY IN MODE A4)

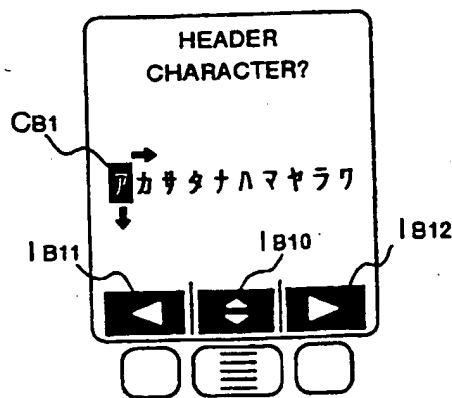
FIG.5



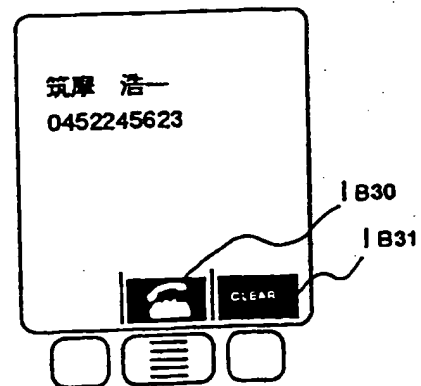
(A) DIRECTORY 1
(SOFT KEY IN INITIAL MODE B0)



(C) DIRECTORY 3
(SOFT KEY IN MODE B2)



(B) DIRECTORY 2
(SOFT KEY IN MODE B1)



(D) DIRECTORY 4
(SOFT KEY IN MODE B3)

FIG.6

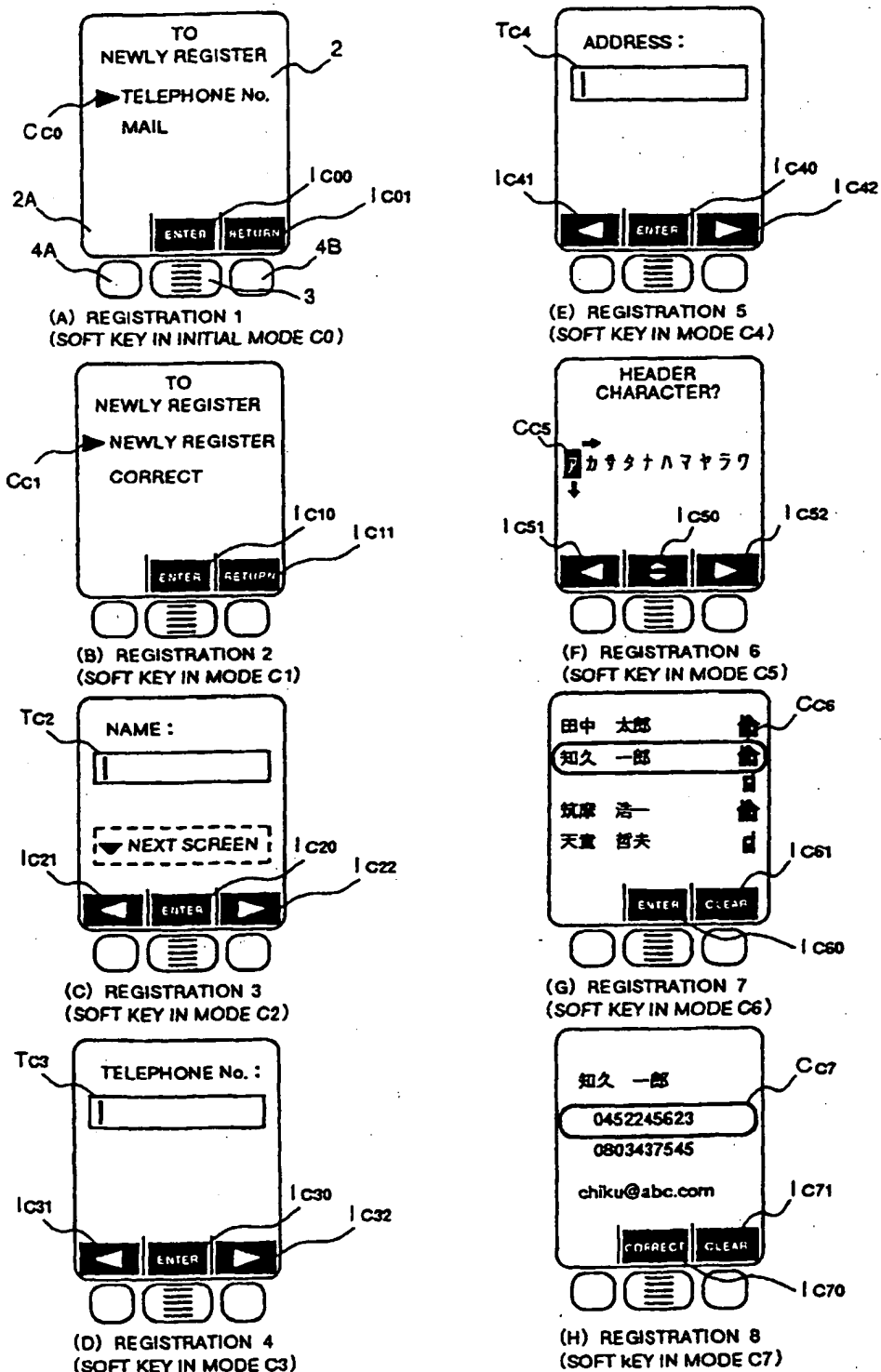
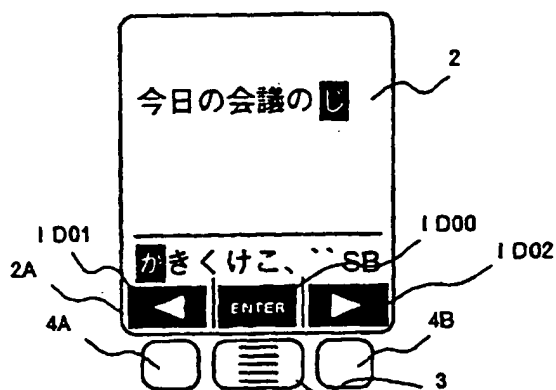
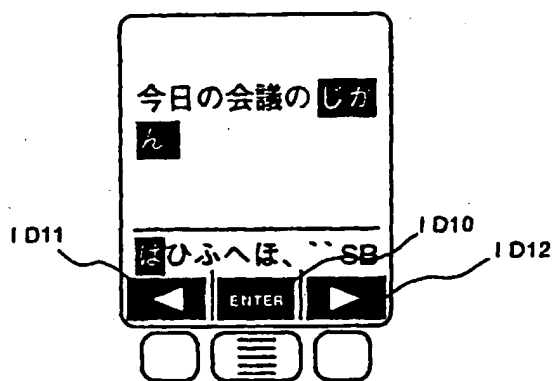


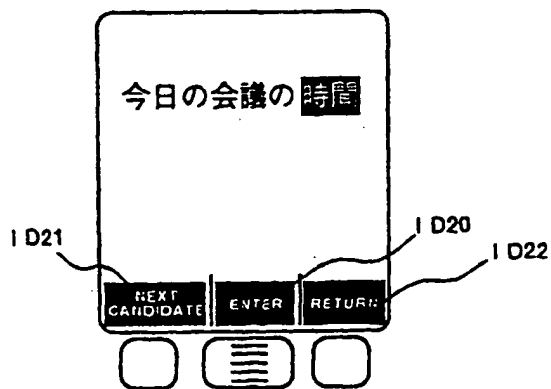
FIG.7



(A) CHARACTER ENTRY1
(SOFT KEY IN INITIAL MODE D0)



(B) CHARACTER ENTRY2
(SOFT KEY IN MODE D1)



(C) CHARACTER ENTRY3
(SOFT KEY IN MODE D2)

FIG.8

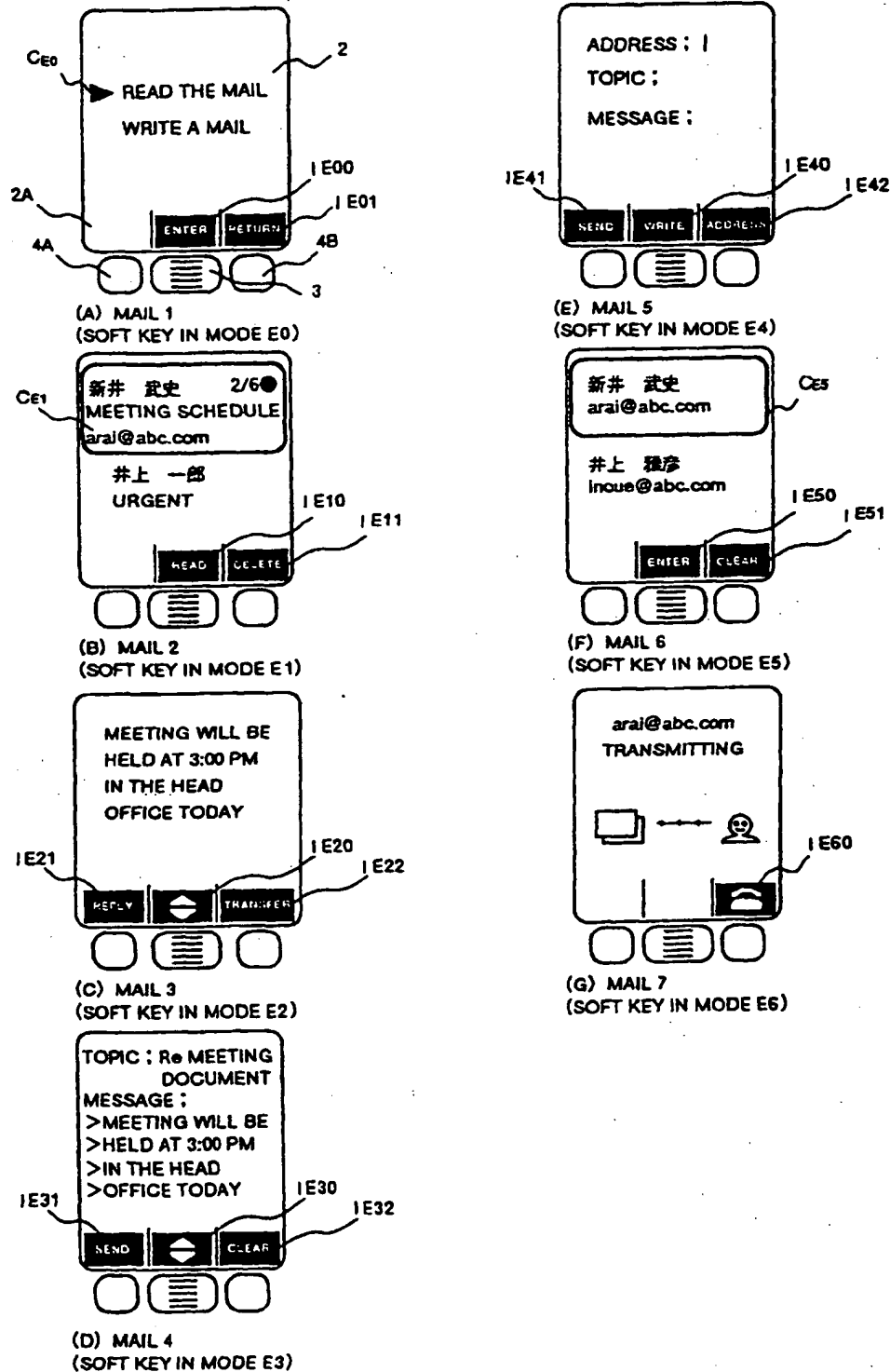
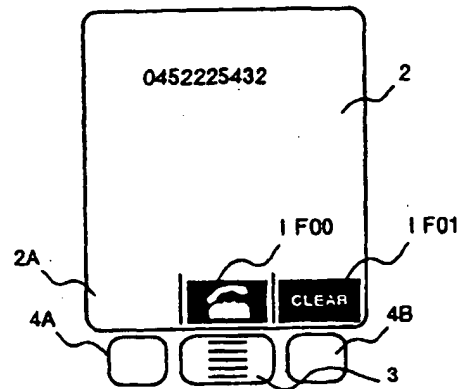
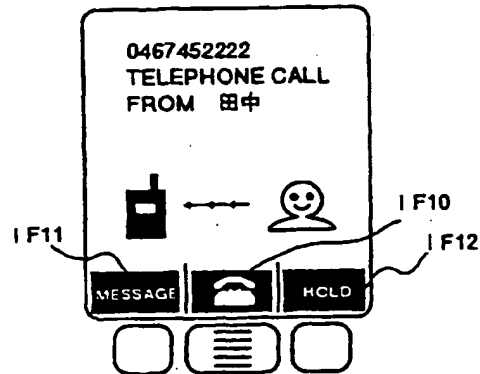


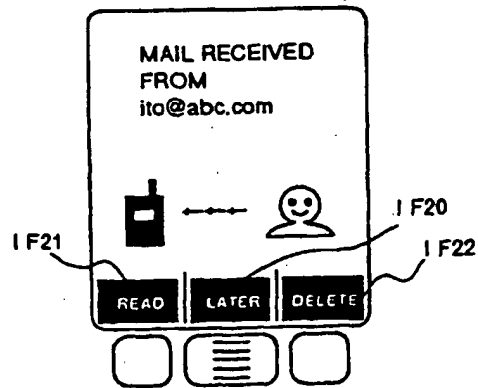
FIG.9



(A) TRANSMISSION
(SOFT KEY IN MODE F0)



(B) RECEPTION
(SOFT KEY IN MODE F1)



(C) RECEPTION
(SOFT KEY IN MODE F2)

FIG.10

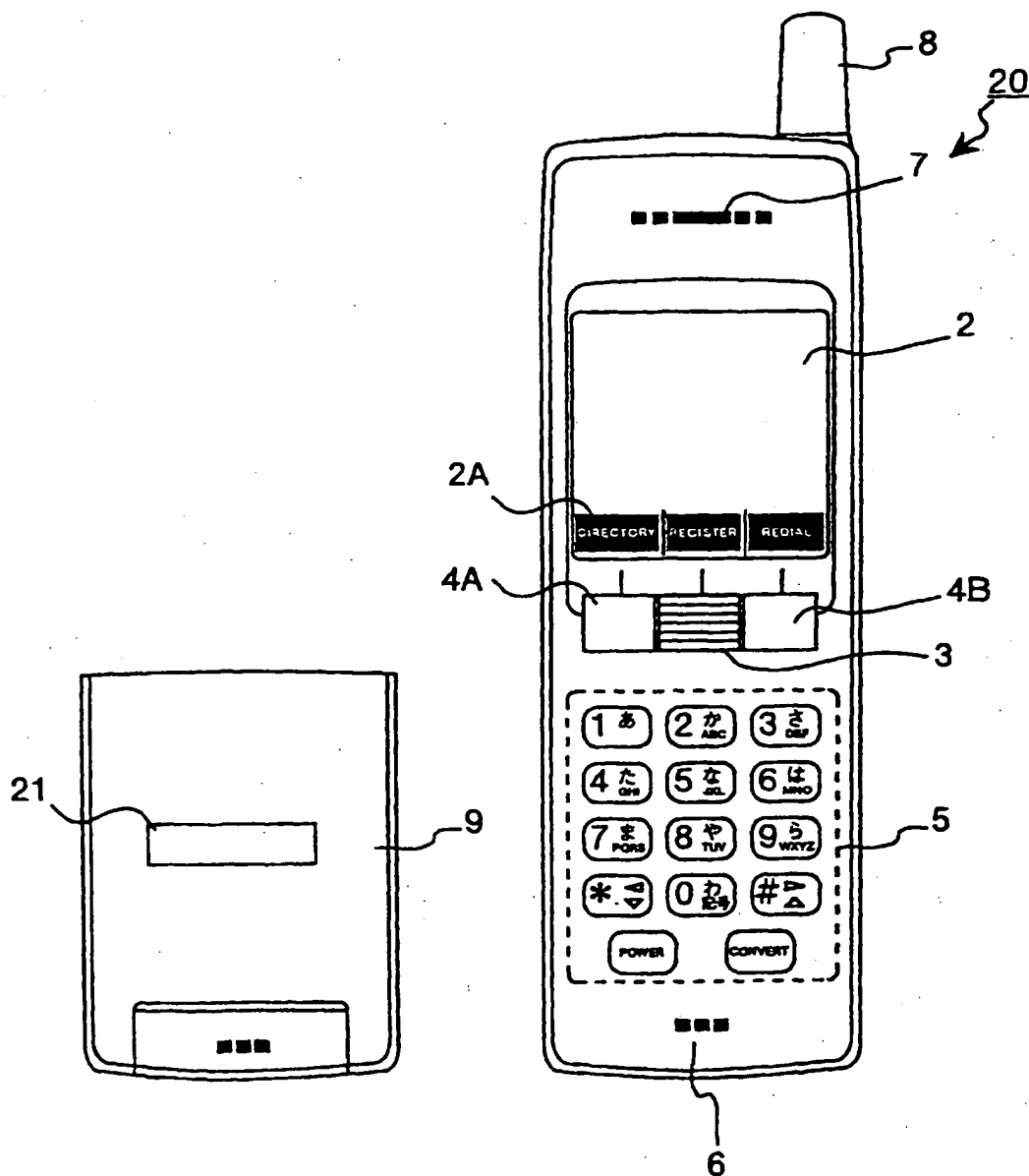


FIG.11

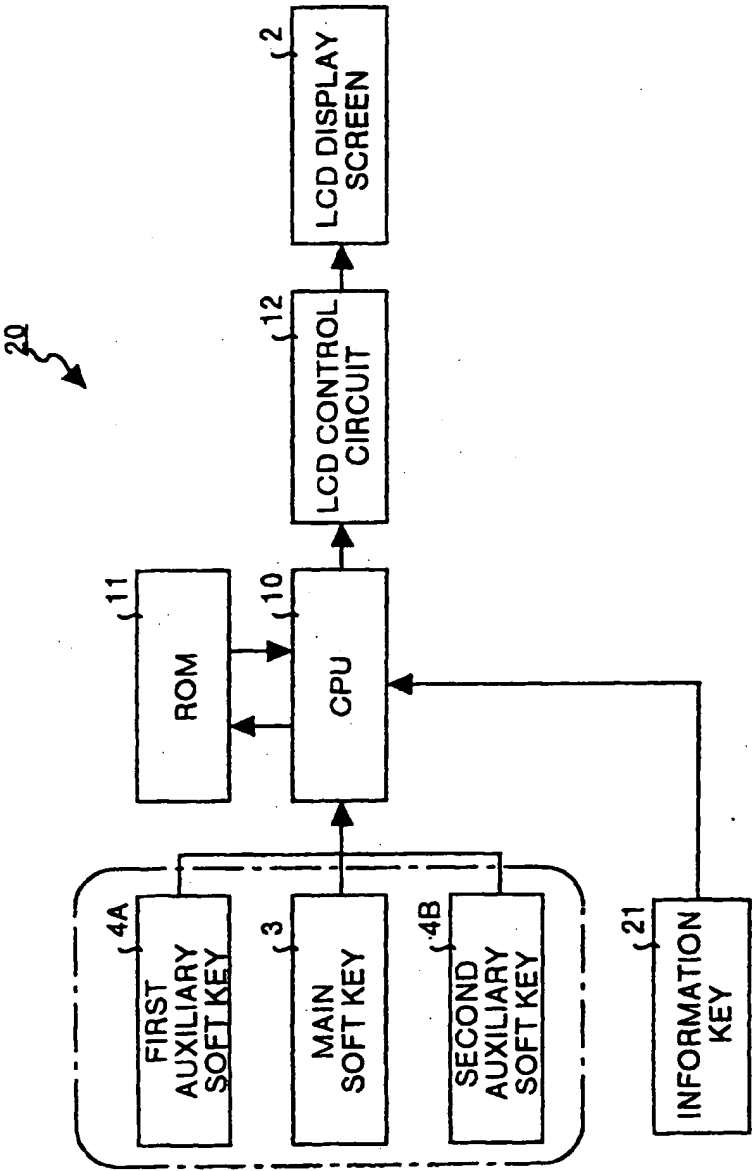


FIG.12

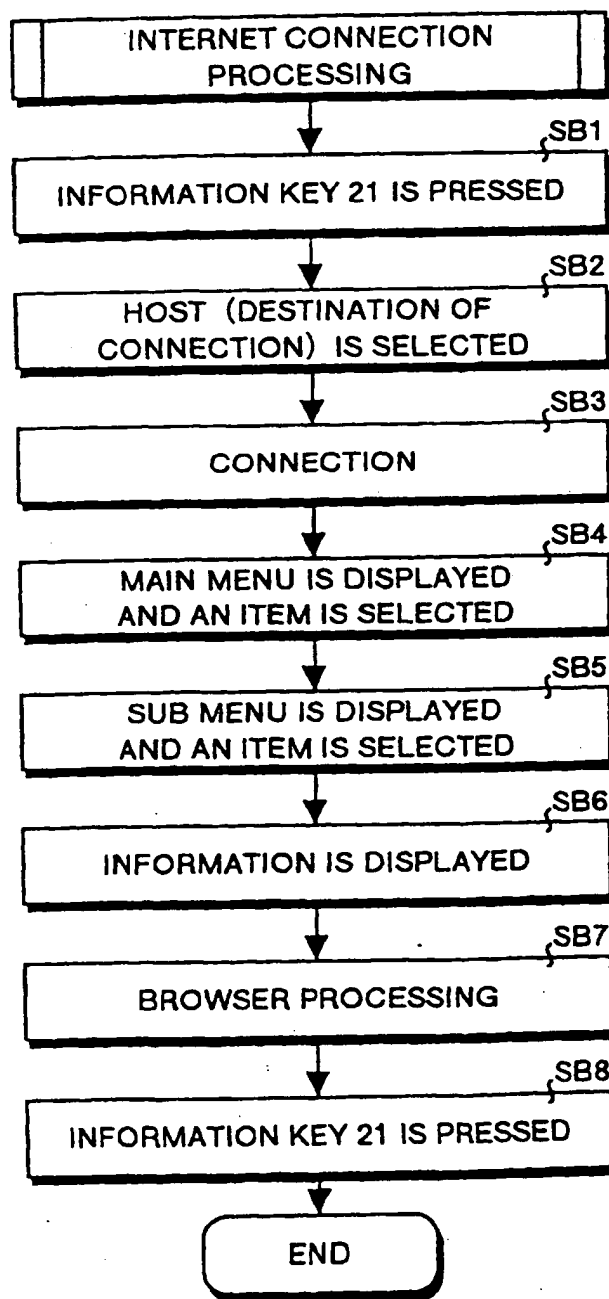


FIG.13

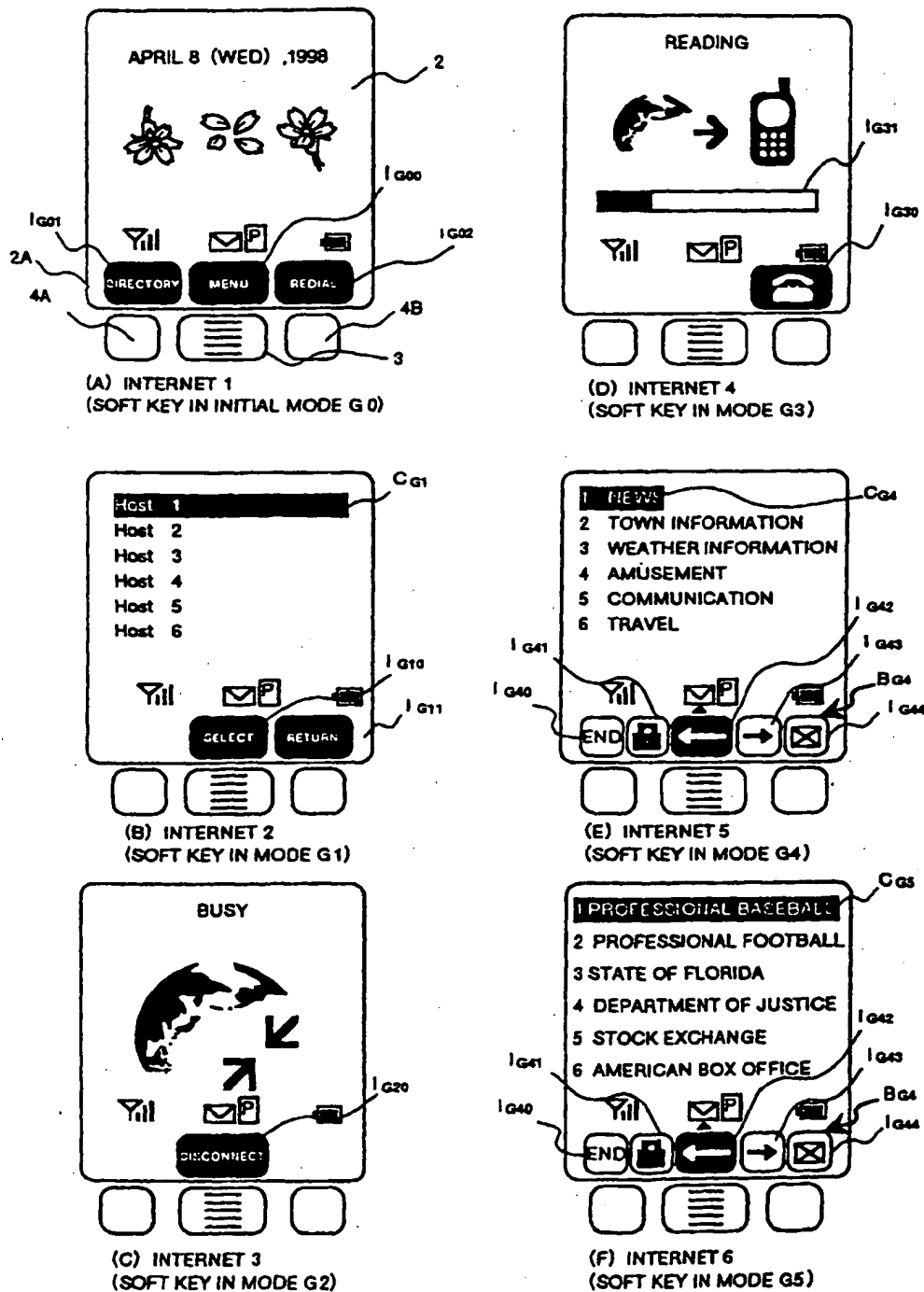


FIG.14

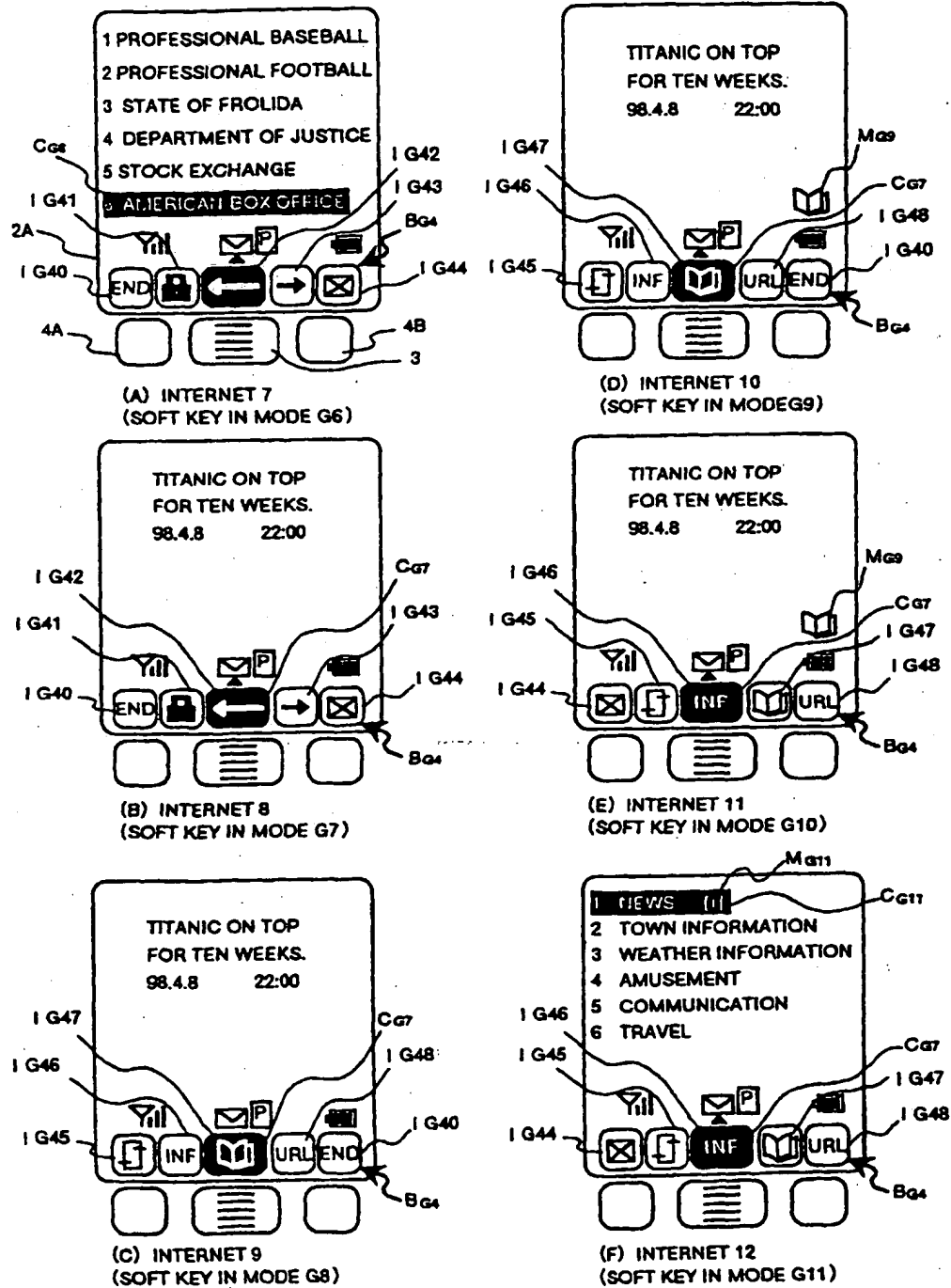


FIG.15

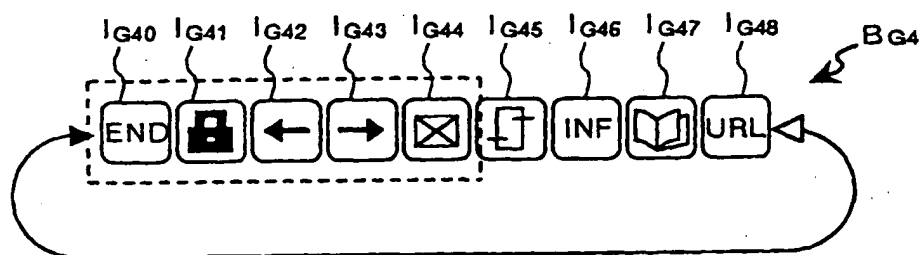


FIG. 16

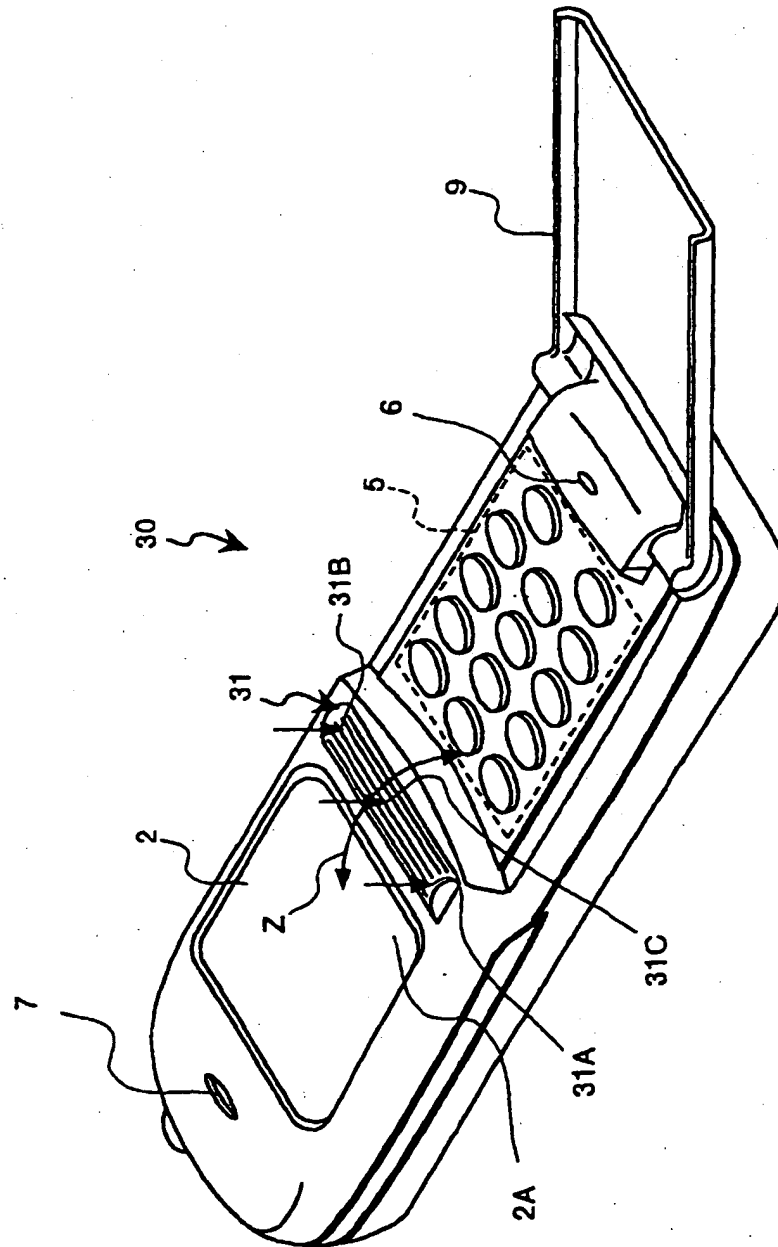


FIG.17

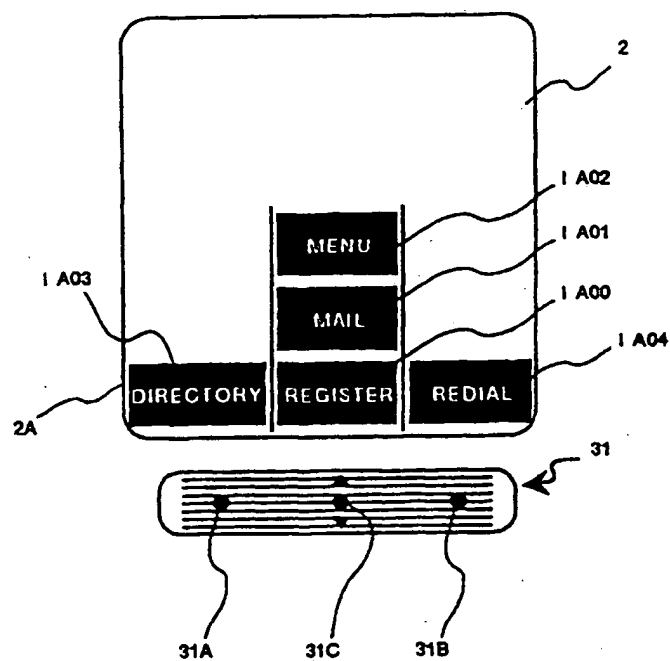
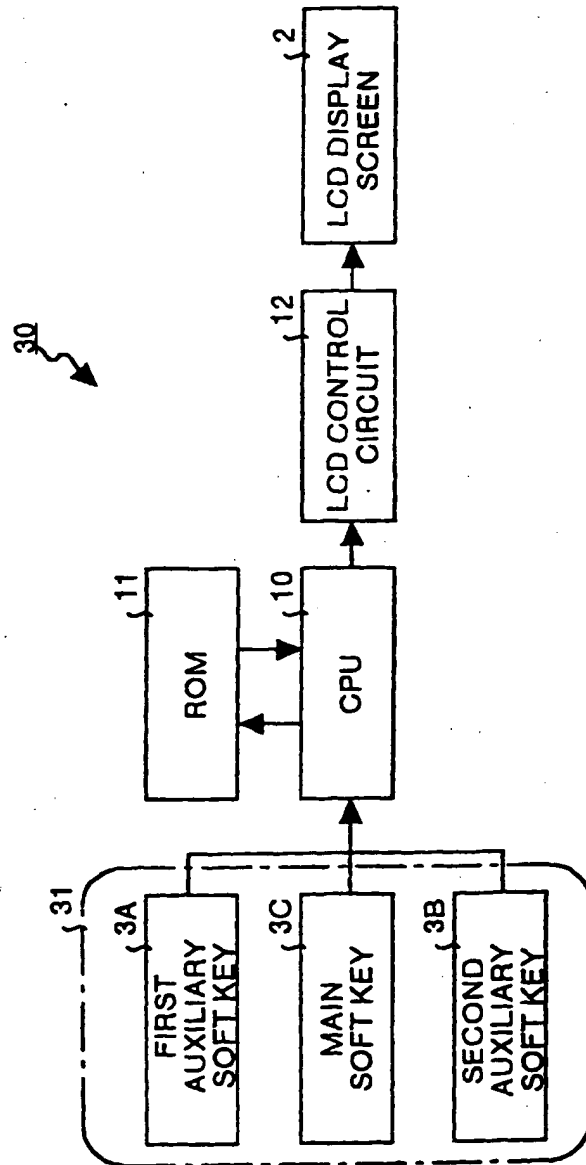


FIG.18



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/JP99/00387

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER Int.Cl. ⁸ G06F3/00, 3/02, 3/023, 3/14		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) Int.Cl. ⁸ G06F3/00, 3/02, 3/023, 3/14		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1926-1996 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-1999 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-1999 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-1999		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	JP, 9-212281, A (Sony Corp.), 15 August, 1997 (15. 08. 97) & KR, 97064023, A	1-10
Y	JP, 9-34621, A (Sony Corp.), 7 February, 1997 (07. 02. 97) & EP, 755126, A2 & KR, 97009003, A	1-10
Y	JP, 9-34620, A (Sony Corp.), 7 February, 1997 (07. 02. 97) & EP, 755142, A2 & KR, 97009002, A	1-10
Y	JP, 8-234884, A (Casio Computer Co., Ltd.), 13 September, 1996 (13. 09. 96) (Family: none)	1-10
Y	Microfilm of the specification and drawings annexed to the request of Japanese Utility Model Application No. 2-23623 (Laid-open No. 3-116450) (Carl Mfg. Co., Ltd.), 3 December, 1991 (03. 12. 91) (Family: none)	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "A" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 22 April, 1999 (22. 04. 99)		Date of mailing of the international search report 11 May, 1999 (11. 05. 99)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office		Authorized officer
Facsimile No.		Telephone No.

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)